Who wants to weed?

Sheet mulching can be a valuable tool in non-chemical weed control, and less-labor intensive soil preparation.

Sheet mulching can reduce the amount of organic material going to the landfill, and the work it takes to get it there.

For More Information

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300 Desmond Dr. SE
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Grays Harbor County Solid Waste
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Composting Information
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GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY
NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

P.O. Box 1828
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GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY
NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

Sheet Mulch

Reduce *Weeds Naturally*

Phone: (360) 482-2265

Mulching improves the retention of water and nutrients in the soil, increases beneficial microbial activity, and suppresses weed growth.

Mulch is a layer of organic material, much like the naturally occurring layer of litter on a forest floor. In a forest, falling leaves, twigs, needles, and decaying plants form a sheet of nutrient rich, absorbent material alive with microbes, fungus, and insects. Mulch is an important part of the natural cycle of plant growth in soil.

Sheet mulching can be used in converting lawn into garden areas, established plantings and for controlling weed infestations.

THE BASIC PROCESS

⇒ Lightly chop or roll down grass and weeds. Do not remove.
⇒ Add dry leaves, compost, worm castings, or poultry or stock manure 2 to 3 inches thick.
⇒ Add a layer of green weeds (no seeds) or fresh grass clippings.
⇒ Water well.
⇒ Lay down overlapping sheets of newspaper, cardboard, or burlap bags.
⇒ (optional) Add another layer of compost or composted manure.
⇒ Add a top dressing of weed free material, bark, sawdust, chopped leaves, grass clippings, twigs, etc.

WHAT HAPPENS UNDER THERE?

Underneath the weed barrier, the grass and weeds decay and quickly become food for earthworms, nature's little roto-tillers. Earthworms thrive in the moist, nutrient rich environment and incorporate the soil amendments into the soil.

Weed seeds are too deep to germinate (provided you haven't turned or tilled the area).

Clay soil will drain more rapidly due to the increase in organic matter, and sandy soil will not drain too rapidly due to the increased absorption of the same organic matter.

The top layer will decompose over time and may need to be applied again. To make sure that tree, shrub, and perennial roots do not get buried too deeply, pull back old material and reapply to the same depth.

WHAT CAN BE USED?

Use what you have.

- Leaves
- Grass clippings
- Twigs
- Woody materials run through a shredder
- Weeds (best to use in bottom layer)
- Food scraps can be buried first to avoid wildlife (or pet) attraction.
- Newspaper, cardboard.
- Sawdust
- Bark

Converting grassy areas to future garden plots is much easier using the sheet mulching method, and composts the sod in place without the back-breaking chore of removing.

Trees and shrubs can be planted first in an area to be sheet mulched. It is best to plant the trees or shrubs first, shallowly, and then sheet mulch around them. Do not bury too deeply. It is much easier to put them in first than to have to cut a hole in the sheet mulch for planting.

Sheet mulching is a great way to create a barrier for emerging weeds. Some of the more invasive weeds can be restrained from spreading over fence lines, or from ditches by your new "mulch zone" without the use of herbicides. Many invasive weeds thrive in soils:

⇒ with little organic matter,
⇒ are compacted, or
⇒ with little in the way of nutrients.

Sheet mulching improves the quality of the soil and the opportunity for desirable plants to compete with invasive weeds.

Sheet mulching saves time, and work!